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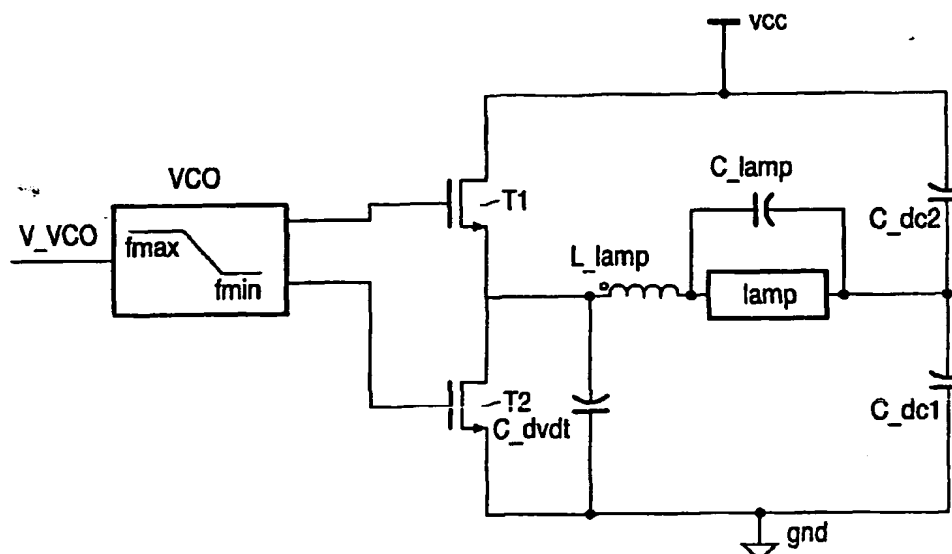
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(54) Title: BALLAST CIRCUIT FOR OPERATING A GAS DISCHARGE LAMP



(57) Abstract: Ballast circuit for operating a gas discharge lamp, comprising a half-bridge DC-AC converter having a voltage controlled oscillator (VCO) for alternately switching the switches (T1; T2) of said half-bridge, said oscillator (VCO) having an input with a control voltage ( $V_{vco}$ ) which determines the operating frequency of said half-bridge, a resonance circuit connected to said half-bridge for feeding the lamp, and a feedback circuit connected at a first end to said resonance circuit for adjusting the operating frequency of said half-bridge, wherein the other end of said feedback circuit is connected to the input of said voltage controlled oscillator (VCO) and designed such that during at least a substantial part of the start-up period of the lamp an equilibrium exists wherein the half-bridge frequency is at least nearly equal to the resonance frequency and the half-bridge voltage is forced to operate at least nearly in phase with the half-bridge current.

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